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**Collaborative Learning; an Effective Way of Instructional Method in English Language  
Classroom for Engineering Graduates**

**Abstract**

With the drastic change in the teaching and learning process, student's involvement in the classroom plays an important role. Collaborative learning is a method of teaching and learning in which students work in small groups in a structured activity to explore a significant question or create a meaningful task. It's a group work, where the students discuss a lecture or assigned a task from different places over the internet or social media. Teacher is the facilitator, mentor and spectator too. This paper deals with the present teaching and learning experiences with the collaborative learning method that can be applied in English language classroom for engineering

graduates. This method supports learners to plan an effective teaching for promoting the students learning to improve group learning skills. The paper also confers the importance of collaborative learning, its benefits in the classroom, difference between collaborative method and traditional approach, what should be the role of a teacher in conducting successful collaborative learning and how important is the layout and furniture of the classroom while conducting group activities.

Key words: Collaborative method, traditional approach, learners, teachers, group learning skills, and challenges.

## Introduction

Collaborative learning is an instruction method in which learners work in groups towards a common goal. Learners are responsible for one another's learning. Thus, success of one student helps other students to be successful.

It's an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students or student and teachers together (Smith and McGregor, 1992).

In this method of learning, each and every student involve in learning by discussing each other. Here, the teacher teaches less and learners learn more.

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” (Hellen Keller).

Collaborative learning changes the role of a teacher to monitor. To motivate the slow learners, to improve their group learning skills, the only way is to break away from the traditional teaching. This method of learning could assist the students to overcome these challenges by supplementing text with group learning activities.

Aim of the study

The main aim of the study is to find out if collaborative learning method would affect an improvement in learners to improve communication skills, group skills, interpersonal skills and also to develop personal and professional growth.

#### Importance and benefits of Group learning

Collaborative learning is an approach, that encourages students to create groups and work together to solve a given problem. Learners have different skills, passion and knowledge, where they can learn new things from one another also understand different perceptions. When working together, for an effective collaboration and to reach common goal, they will learn to trust each other. Learners works as a team, therefore gain confidence. This method can help the shy or mute speakers to express among the group. In a group learning, the learners who are not so skilled can improve their abilities through peer interaction in the context of a common goal. This always become much better and easy way of conducting collaborative learning. It allows discussions and critical thinking So, students learn more and remember what they have learned for a longer period of time.

#### Difference between Traditional and Collaborative learning and teaching

1. Traditional approach is Teacher centered goal, whereas, Collaborative learning is Student centered goal.
2. In traditional learning, teacher transfer content/ knowledge to student, whereas, in collaborative learning, group divides content and knowledge jointly among group.
3. Traditional approach is isolated learning, whereas collaborative learning is a group learning.
4. In traditional learning, students are passive learners, whereas in collaborative learning, students are active learners.

5. In traditional learning, students work independently, little interaction and work is not shared among the students. Whereas in collaborative learning, prolonged interaction and peer discussion helps the students to participate actively to reach the goal.

#### Role of a teacher

To have an effective collaborative learning group, teachers must know their students well. I have conducted few collaborative activities such as group discussion, jigsaw and think - pair-share activity etc. in my classroom and would like to suggest few points for effective and successful collaborative learning.

1. Atmosphere should be relaxed, comfortable and friendly.
2. Classroom layout: Check the layout of the classroom such as spacious room, movable chairs where the participants can sit face to face.
3. Clearly define the instructions for the students before conducting the group activity.

Assign the roles to the participants according to their work and capability like:

1. Initiator: The one who initiate the group, propose and suggest among the group.
2. Informer: the one who offers facts expresses feelings and gives opinion in a group activity.
3. Clarifier: the one who interprets, defines, clarifies everything in group learning process.
4. Summarizer: the one who links, restates, concludes and summarizes the discussion among the group.

So, the teacher's role shifts immediately into that of a mentor, facilitator or sometimes merely that of a spectator.

Here I would like to share one of the examples of collaborative learning i.e. JIGSAW.

I have conducted JIGSAW activity for I B Tech II semester students for 36 students and considered the following steps:

Step 1: I have divided students into a group of six students. Total groups are six. My class strength is thirty-six.

Step 2: I have divided the day's reading or lesson into 4-6 parts, and Assign each student to learn one segment.

Step 3: students learned and processed their assigned segment independently. (Give students time to read over their segment at least twice and become familiar with it.)

Step 4: I have put the students who completed the same segment together into an "Expert group" to talk about and process the details of their segment.

Step 5: Then, students returned to their original "Jigsaw" groups and took turns sharing the segments they've become experts on.

Step 6: The student's completed a task or a quiz that's reliant on them having understood the material from the contributions of all their group members.

Step 7: I have asked the entire group to give the presentation. Here, each and every student must speak two to three points. Accordingly, they did and could speak some points.

Step 8: I have intimated the students that they are going to evaluate and get the marks based on their active participation/presentation.

#### Duration

A jigsaw activity can be performed in a 30-minute session. The students would then each have five minutes to explain their topic to the group. A follow-up time of at least 10 minutes should be provided in a full class group.

#### Evaluation

At the time of expert's presentation, the evaluation can be done based on the different parameters such as Initiation/introduction, content, cohesive and coherence, fluency, clarity of the topic, voice modulation so on.

Students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count.

By following these steps and strategies, I could do it easily and well.

Team wise score: *For 10 points*

Team No. 1

Participant	score	Median score
1	6	6
2	6	
3	8	
4	8	
5	6	
6	5	

Team No. 2

Participant	Score	Median score
1	8	7
2	6	
3	7	
4	9	

5	6	
6	7	

Team No: 3

Participant	score	Median score  8
1	8	
2	6	
3	8	
4	6	
5	8	
6	9	

Team No: 4

Participant	score	Median score  8
1	9	
2	8	
3	8	
4	7	
5	6	
6	9	

Team No: 5

Participant	score	Median score
1	7	7
2	6	
3	9	
4	8	
5	6	
6	7	

Team No: 6

Participant	score	Median score
1	7	7
2	9	
3	7	
4	6	
5	8	
6	7	

The median score was 7

One of the teams secured less than the median score. The reason for outperformed is because they scored less points. The evaluation done based on the parameters such as

Interactive communication skills - 2 point

Fluency & clarity - 2 points

Content they delivered, - 2 points

Coherent and coherence, - 2 points

Grammar and vocabulary. - 2 points

Challenges faced by the teachers and learners

The layout and furniture of the classroom can affect the learning environment. The student's desks which is not movable and difficult to have face to face interaction among students. This is very difficult task for a student and teacher to work together in a rigid setup. Small groups of three or four can sit together in a row.

For example, when I have conducted the Think-Pair-Share activity, students turned to whoever sitting beside them and paired each other to discuss. While I was conducting another activity like JIGSAW and Group Discussion, I have faced very difficult to arrange the benches, as the students cannot sit facing each other.

1. It is difficult to monitor large classroom with multi groups.
2. Students come to class without preparation and with blank mind.
3. Some Group activities consumes lot of time to conduct few activities like JIGSAW, Group discussion, Think-Aloud-Pair-Share activities etc.
4. It is difficult to manage the noise of the students while discussing.
5. Slow learners may not participate because they feel shy and not are less confident.
6. Some learners simply irresponsible and careless in completing the assigned work.
7. Some students dominate on others in group activities.
8. Some students prefer to work alone rather than in groups.
9. The active students speak more and won't let others to speak.

How did I overcome with this problem?

While collaborative work was going on the class, these are the necessary steps I have taken for effective collaborative learning.

1. To keep the discussion going among the team members, I have monitored each group to Check whether any of the participants have any doubts, misunderstood, confusion, dominated by other members in a group etc. I have clarified their doubts, problems and suggested them. In the beginning, I gave instructions to the students that each and every participant should participate in the discussion. They should note down the points discussed among the group. Later submit it to me.
2. I have motivated non participated students by saying not to hesitate and motivated to speak and participate in the discussion. For this, team leader gave some hints and helped the mute speakers to speak.
3. For the mute participants, I have told them that they are rewarded in the form marks. This worked well.
  - a. Every student participated actively.
4. To open a dead lock

I did not face this situation when I was conducting the JIGSAW activity. I can give some suggestion to overcome this problem.

The dead lock happens when the participants are not transparent with others about how they are not curious enough about others opinion /conclusion and this forms the deadlock. Making shift to transparency, curiosity and creativity is the solution to make the process work. Among the discussion, when each and every member have their own opinion and won't agree with each other and this creates problem and resolve anything. At this time, the team leader has

to lead the team and has to solve a difficult puzzle together. Unity of team is required. The team is focused on the challenge of developing a solution, not on challenging each other.

## Conclusion

Collaborative learning is about assisting students work in team or a group. Collaborative learning has social benefits as well as academic. Students work with each other who have different learning skills, cultured background, attitude and personalities. These differences compel them to deal with conflicts and interact with each other. Finally there is an opportunity for the development of higher level thinking skills, leadership skills and team work skills.

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